

Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 ATHENS 5365

EXDIS

DEPARTMENT REPEAT OTHER ADDRESSEES AS DESIRED

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PGOV, MARR, GR, US
SUBJECT: PERSONAL CONVERSATION WITH PRIME MINISTER CARAMANLIS:
MY DEPARTURE, TURKISH ELECTIONS, U.S. POLICY IN THE
AREA, AND DEFENSE COOPERATION NEGOTIATIONS

1. SUMMARY. CARAMANLIS ASKED TO SEE ME PRIVATELY
LAST NIGHT IN ONE LAST EFFORT TO AVOID MY DEPARTURE
FROM GREECE (WHICH I REPORT AT ALL IN ORDER TO
PROVIDE SOME FEEL FOR THE SETTING IN WHICH HIS
OTHER COMMENTS WERE MADE). HE EXPRESSED DISAPPOINT-
MENT ABOUT THE OUTCOME OF THE TURKISH ELECTIONS AND
WAS PESSIMISTIC ABOUT GREEK-TURKISH RELATIONS. HE
DISAGREED WITH EMERGING U.S. POLICY TOWARDS TURKEY
AND PROBLEMS IN THE AREA. HE REAFFIRMED READINESS TO
FINISH OUR DEFENSE COOPERATION NEGOTIATIONS FORTHWITH
AND RESURFACED HIS OLD OBJECTIONS TO LINING MILITARY
ASSISTANCE TO BASE AGREEMENTS. END SUMMARY

2. PRIME MINISTER CARAMANLIS GOT IN TOUCH WITH ME
DURING THE DAY YESTERDAY AND ASKED ME TO COME AND SEE
HIM "PERSONALLY AND PRIVATELY" LAST NIGHT. HE SAID HE
HAD BEEN OFFICIALLY INFORMED THAT I WOULD BE LEAVING
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SOON AND HE WANTED TO BE ABSOLUTELY CERTAIN THAT THERE
WAS NO WAY TO AVOID THIS. HE WENT ON AT SOME LENGTH,
WHICH I SEE NO NEED TO REPORT HERE, ABOUT WHY I SHOULD
REMAIN AS AMBASSADOR AND REFERRED TO HIS EARLIER
MESSAGES TO PRESIDENT CARTER AND SECRETARY VANCE ON THE
SUBJECT.

3. I EXPLAINED IN CONSIDERABLE DETAIL, AS I HAD SEVERAL TIMES BEFORE ON OTHER OCCASIONS, THE REASONS WHY I WAS BEING REASSIGNED TO THE U.S. AND PRAISED MY SUCCESSOR AS ONE FROM WHOM OUTSTANDING PERFORMANCE COULD BE EXPECTED. IN THE END, CARAMANLIS LAPSED INTO HIS USUAL GRUMBLING ABOUT THE INCOMPETENCE OF HIS SUBORDINATES, HOW HE HAS TO DO EVERYTHING HIMSELF, NEVER FINDS SUFFICIENT UNDERSTANDING FROM WASHINGTON OR ANYWHERE ELSE, AND NOW WOULD HAVE TO START ALL OVER AGAIN WITH A NEW AMBASSADOR. HOWEVER, I THINK THE WAY HAS BEEN SATISFACTORILY PREPARED FOR MY SUCCESSOR' EARLY AND FULL ACCEPTANCE.

4. TURKISH ELECTIONS. I KEPT TRYING TO GET CARAMANLIS TO TALK ABOUT SUBSTANTIVE MATTERS BUT HE KEPT SAYING HE DIDN'T WANT TO DISCUSS "BUSINESS". HE DID REFLECT, HOWEVER, CONSIDERABLE DISAPPOINTMENT AND PESSIMISM ABOUT THE RESULTS OF THE TURKISH ELECTIONS. HE HAD HOPED AGAINST HOPE THAT ONE PARTY COULD HAVE WON SUFFICIENT SEATS TO FORM A GOVERNMENT IN ANKARA; THEN THERE WOULD HAVE BEEN A REAL POSSIBILITY OF A RAPID SETTLEMENT ON CYPRUS AND OF GREEK-TURKISH DIFFERENCES. HOWEVER, ECEVIT -- AND, NOT INCONCEIVABLY, PERHAPS EVEN DEMIREL -- WOULD ONCE AGAIN FIND THEIR POSSIBILITIES OF GOVERNING IN TURKEY HOSTAGE TO A TINY HANDFUL OF EXTREMELY NATIONALISTIC, DEMOGOGIC TURKISH DEPUTIES. THUS, HE FEARED A CONTINUING "DEADLOCK". HE SAID -- ONLY HALF JOKINGLY (IF THAT)-- THAT MAYBE IT WOULD BE BETTER FOR ALL CONCERNED IF THE TURKISH MILITARY TOOK POWER FOR AWHILE IN TURKEY. HE SCOFFED AT EXPRESSIONS OF OPTIMISM BEING HEARD FROM SOME QUARTERS ON CYPRUS
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AND ELSEWHERE (BASED ON THE PREMISE THAT ECEVIT WOULD BE BETTER POSITIONED THAN DEMIREL HAD BEEN TO MAKE CONCESSIONS ON CYPRUS). HE SAID THE EXTREMIST DEPUTIES IN TURKEY CONTINUED TO HOLD THE BALANCE OF POWER AND WOULD CONTINUE TO "BLACKMAIL" ANY PRIME MINISTER. THUS THE OUTLOOK WAS "VERY BAD". IN FACT, HE ADDED RATHER DARKLY, IF HE BECAME PRIME MINISTER, ECEVIT MIGHT BE TEMPTED TO REPEAT WITH SOME KIND OF LIMITED ASSAULT ON GREEK ISLANDS IN THE EASTERN AEGEAN THE SUCCESS HE HAD HAD THREE YEARS AGO ON CYPRUS. THEN WHAT? CARAMANLIS SIGHED DESPONDENTLY, AND DESPITE MY BEST EFFORTS I WAS UNABLE TO GET HIM TO LOOK ON THE BRIGHTER SIDE OF THINGS.

5. U.S. POLICY IN THE AREA; ALTHOUGH NOT EXACTLY IN THE SEQUENCE PRESENTED IN THIS MESSAGE -- AND SOMEWHAT DISJOINTEDLY -- CARAMANLIS ALSO REFLECTED DISCOURAGEMENT ABOUT EMERGING U.S. POLICY TOWARDS TURKEY AND PROBLEMS IN THE AREA. HE SAID THAT HE HAD ATTEMPTED TO SUGGEST TO

PRESIDENT CARTER AND OTHER TOP U.S. OFFICIALS DURING
LAST MONTH'S LONDON MEETINGS WHAT THE OPTIMUM U.S.
APPROACH SHOULD BE. HOWEVER, HE KEPT RECEIVING RECURRENT
SIGNALS FROM WASHINGTON THAT THE OVERRIDING CONCERN THERE WAS
NATO AND THE CONSEQUENT NEED FOR GREECE AND TURKEY TO PATCH UP
THEIR DIFFERENCES PROMPTLY AND REPAIR THE SOUTHERN FLANK.
IN HIS VIEW, THIS WAS A BACKWARDS APPROACH.
HIS OBJECTIVES, HE SAID, WERE THE SAME
AS OURS, INCLUDING A DETERMINED RESTRENGTHENING
OF THE SOUTHERN FLANK AND THE WESTERN ALLIANCE. HOWEVER,
IN THE FIRST INSTANCE IT WAS NECESSARY FOR WASHINGTON

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 ATHENS 5365

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TO REVAMP ITS POLICY AND APPROACH TOWARD TURKEY
(ALONG LINES REPORTED MANY TIMES BEFORE) WHICH WOULD
ASSURE A SETTLEMENT OF THE AEGEAN AND CYPRUS
PROBLEMS, WHICH IN TURN WOULD ACCOMPLISH OUR OVERALL,
MUTUAL OBJECTIVES. I SAID THESE THINGS WERE NOT
COMPARTMENTALIZED BUT MOVED TOGETHER IN TANDEM. HE
NONETHELESS LAMENTED WHAT HE SAW AS OUR INVERTED
APPROACH TO PROBLEMS IN THE AREA.

6. DEFENSE COOPERATION NEGOTIATIONS. WE ALSO HAD A
FEW WORDS ON THIS SUBJECT AND CARAMANLIS REAFFIRMED
HIS READINESS TO COMPLETE THE NEGOTIATIONS AS QUICKLY
AS POSSIBLE. IN RESPONSE TO MY DIRECT QUESTIONING, HE
SAID HE HAD TO CONTINUE TO RESERVE HIS POSITION ON WHEN
OUR CLASSIFIED NEGOTIATING CONTACTS COULD BE MADE PUBLIC
AND ALSO AS TO WHEN AND HOW ANY OFFICIAL INITIALLING OR
SIGNING OF THE NEGOTIATED DOCUMENTS AND AGREEMENTS COULD
TAKE PLACE. HE STRESSED, HOWEVER, THAT THIS NEED NOT
HAMPER -- IN FACT, IT WOULD FACILITATE -- THE RAPID

CONCLUSION OF THE NEGOTIATIONS THEMSELVES AT THE
PROFESSIONAL AND TECHNICAL LEVELS.

7. I ASKED CARAMANLIS WHY HE WAS SO DEAD SET AGAINST
ANY PUBLICITY NOW AND SO RESERVED ABOUT FINALLY SIGNING
OR PUBLICIZING THE AGREEMENTS. HE SAID IT WAS BECAUSE
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OF THE "ECONOMIC" ASPECTS OF THE AGREEMENTS AND THE
FACT THAT THE GREEK DCA WAS SO PUBLICLY LINKED EVERYWHERE WITH
THE TURKISH DCA. HE SAID HE HAD ALWAYS VIGOROUSLY OPPOSED THE
USG GRANTING "MILITARY ASSISTANCE" TO TURKEY IN RETURN
FOR TURKEY'S AGREEMENT TO ALLOW U.S. MILITARY INSTALLA-
TIONS IN ITS TERRITORY. HE HAD MADE IT ABUNDANTLY
CLEAR BEFORE WASHINGTON NEGOTIATED THE TURKISH DCA OVER
A YEAR AGO THAT THE USG WOULD BE MAKING A MISTAKE IF IT
BOWED TO "TURKISH BLACKMAIL" AND OFFERED SUCH "RENT".
EITHER U.S. INSTALLATIONS ON TURKISH SOIL SERVED COMMON
DEFENSE NEEDS AND PURPOSES OR THEY DIDN'T. IF THEY
DID, NO "PAYMENT" SHOULD HAVE TO BE MADE FOR THEM, AND IF
THEY DIDN'T THEY SHOULD NOT BE THERE.
THAT WAS THE POSITION HE TOOK IN GREECE
AND THE POSITION THAT ANY PARLIAMENTARY GOVERNMENT
COULD SUSTAIN. HOWEVER, ONCE THE TURKISH DCA HAD BEEN
NEGOTIATED IT BECAME A REQUIREMENT FOR HIS GOVERNMENT
TO HAVE A COMPARABLY ARRANGEMENT. NONETHELESS, HE MADE
IT WUITE CLEAR THAT IF THE DOLLAR-SPECIFIED MILITARY
ASSISTANCE PROVIDED FOR IN THE TURKISH DCA COULD BE
SEPARATED FROM THE BASE AND INSTALLATION AGREEMENTS
THEMSELVES, HE WOULD GLADLY AND QUICKLY AGREE TO THE
SAME ARRANGEMENT ON U.S.- GREEK DEFENSE COOPERATION,
AND THE AGREEMENTS BEING NEGOTIATED BETWEEN WASHINGTON
AND ATHENS COULD BE QUICKLY FINISHED, SIGNED AND PUBLICIZED.
I WANTED TO STAY WITH THIS SUBJECT FOR SOME
ADDITIONAL TIME BUT CARAMANLIS SAID HE HAD TO LEAVE
BECAUSE OF ANOTHER ENGAGEMENT. WE PARTED WITH HIM
UNDER THE IMPRESSION, ALTHOUGH I DID NOT SO STATE
SPECIFICALLY, THAT AMERICAN AND GREEK NEGOTIATORS
WOULD RESUME THEIR CONTACTS LATER THIS MONTH IN AN
EFFORT TO COMPLETE NEGOTIATIONS ON THE THREE REMAINING
OPEN ISSUES.

7. COMMENT: WHILE I OBVIOUSLY WANT TO REPORT WHAT THE
PRIME MINISTER OF THIS COUNTRY SAYS TO ME ON MATTERS OF
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INTEREST TO WASHINGTON, I AM NOT SUGGESTING THAT ALL THE FOREGOING SHOULD BE TAKEN AT FACE VALUE. CARAMANLIS, NATURALLY, IS ALWAYS TRYING TO GET US TO ADOPT POSITIONS MORE FAVORABLE TO GREECE. AT THE SAME TIME, HIS ASSESSMENT OF THE TURKISH ELECTIONS SEEMS MORE REALISTIC TO ME THAN MOST OTHERS I'VE HEARD IN THE LAST COUPLE OF DAYS. ALSO, HIW RESURFACING OF THE IDEA OF SEPARATING MILITARY ASSISTANCE FROM BASE AGREEMENTS -- WHICH I LET PASS -- COULD CONCEIVABLY HAVE SOME MERIT IN RESOLVING CERTAIN CONGRESSIONAL PROBLEMS IN WASHINGTON, IF BY ANY CHANCE IT COULD ALSO BE SOLD TO THE NEW GOVERNMENT IN TURKEY.
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